



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER

MAY, 1904

POSSIBILITIES IN MUSIC STUDY.

IN the great impulse toward the realization of a more artistic ideal in school music which swept over the country some years ago, various important truths were demonstrated: first, that children's voices, both in the mass and as individuals, are capable of a perfectly legitimate development, and that every normal voice can, if properly taught, become agreeable and expressive; second, that children like good music as well as bad, if they are given the opportunity of hearing and performing it; third, that singing in schools may become a thoroughly artistic product; further, that it may serve as the basis for a complete musical education. As a result of these new conceptions, improvement in music and music-teaching was to be seen in many localities. The abomination known as the "school tone" gradually disappeared. Teachers with some pretension to vocal gift and training took the place of the leathern pedagogues of the singing-school type, and school-rooms began to echo with real music—even classic music. If the interpretation of these excellent works frequently left much to be desired, one had at any rate the satisfaction of knowing that the nobility of the compositions could not fail to leave a permanent impression upon the taste of the young singer. At the same time, the open-minded teacher could but be thankful for suggestions which helped preserve the sweetness and lightness of the voices in his charge.

This movement in behalf of better music and better singing marked a distinct epoch in the history of music-teaching in

America. Previous to this time the vocal ideal of the average pedagogue was to "raise the roof"—an ideal not difficult of realization. That such singing was fraught with demoralization to generations of voices was inevitable. The shrill, harsh voice of childhood developed into the throaty, nasal tone of maturity, and the new school undertook an arduous task in trying to reform both.

Perhaps it was too much to expect that this movement, while repudiating the errors of the system it had replaced, should retain their good features. At any rate, the new methods, while their artistic results were astonishing, swung so far away from the old that even the good inherent in the old was ignored. The fascination of singing a beautiful song without the drudgery of reading notes proved too great to be resisted by either pupil or teacher. Children, instead of hating the music lesson, began to love it best of all. But the rote-song reigned supreme, and any real effort at acquiring the technique of reading notes was abandoned.

The one strength of the old school was that it taught note-reading. Its methods were hard, crude, and unphilosophical; its material, uninteresting and inartistic. But it accomplished what it set out to do—namely, to give the power to decipher the symbols of written music. It did not appeal to the emotions or the expressive instinct of the singer; neither did it give any hint as to the correct use of his voice. It concentrated upon a purely intellectual aspect of the subject, and it would have been strange indeed, when the efforts of instructor and instructed were bent upon the mastery of one problem, if the children had not learned something tangible about music notation. This the more, as the unmusical children were counted out of the game, and by being "excused" from music relieved the teacher of his most difficult task.

To teach children of normal musical ear merely to read music, ignoring the vocal and interpretive aspects of the art, and stripping this to the bare bones of its theoretic skeleton, is an easy undertaking compared to the task the modern music teacher has set for himself.

The two schools which thus confronted each other might be symbolized, the one by an old, gnarled, ill-nourished tree, sending out here and there a few starved leaves; the other by a beautiful armful of blossoms from a flourishing, healthy growth, but without root or vitality of its own. The former showed some appearance of vigor, but was without power to produce either blossom or fruit. The latter offered perfume, beauty, and delight, but parted from its parent tree could equally not hope for fruition.

Latterly, however, the two schools have approached each other, and each has borrowed from the other. The disciples of the new movement were made aware that to sing, even to sing charmingly, is not enough, if the singer derives his songs by imitation from others; that the child barred out from the great field of music by his own inability to think and read is helpless indeed. For the systems which proclaim the vanity of technical training have either been found unable to give their disciples power to perform, or they have substituted a new, and often a more complicated, system of technical training for that which they condemn.

On the other hand, the old school has ceased to make certain demands which were formerly absolute. One seldom hears nowadays that "a child must not be allowed to sing what he has not read." The rote-song has been admitted, though perhaps grudgingly admitted, as legitimate material for study, and there has been some recognition of the fact that it is unjust and unwise to condemn the most musical children to an inevitable and unchanging alto in part-songs.

On all sides there seems to be a strong reaction against partial education in music. That school music may be beautiful music is now universally conceded; only there is, of course, great difference of opinion as to what beautiful music is. It is also considered, not only possible, but necessary, that children in schools should sing with sweet and unstrained voices.

But this is not enough, says intelligent public opinion. The musical sense must be trained. The power to think independently, to sing independently, to write music as well as read it, to understand good music and to love it, and even to make music of one's

own, are some of the things which, we are told, may be expected today of music education in schools.

The ideal of the intelligent teacher of music is one difficult of realization. To keep the fine balance between technique and feeling, between emotional enjoyment and intellectual effort; never to forget the ultimate object of music in the midst of technical drill; to know one's music absolutely—its melody, harmony, and rhythm, the laws governing its structure and interpretation; to be master of the purely vocal side of the art; all this and much more belongs to the equipment of the thorough and artistic teacher of today.

There are, to be sure, strongholds of conservatism all through the country where the methods of fifty years ago still prevail. There are more progressive communities where we find reversions to the dry and hard intellectualism of the past. In the course of study prescribed by one eastern metropolis the study of singing will be seen to have withered and desiccated into the mastery of a set of mathematical problems. These are neatly numbered and systematized, and quite logically arranged: Problems 1-15 for the second grade; Problems 115-156 for the seventh grade. In another large city the supervisor of music insists upon a regular course of training in note-reading in the kindergarten—a barbarous proceeding, indeed, when we remember how much more complicated are the symbols of written music than those of a written language. The reactionary music master in a western city forbids everything which smacks of the “fad,” within the limits of his supervision. Accordingly, because the modern teacher has made much use of music appropriate to the season, as well as songs fitting in more important respects, our supervisor prescribes for a Thanksgiving exercise a sentimental love-song beginning:

Last night the nightingale woke me,
Last night when all was still.

To the musician occupied alone with his art it might seem a far cry from a discussion of music in schools to a consideration of that much-talked-of and greatly desired good—real American music. But to the thoughtful these two subjects seem most inti-

mately connected; for music worthy the name has sprung only from a people the mass of which has been leavened through and through by the gracious influence of song. The artistic impulse expressed itself only through an accustomed medium, and he who originates melody must have a thousand melodies in his mind. Music must be the air he breathes. The composer works out his elaborate forms from the simple songs of the people, but the songs of the people are the expression of the national artistic life, and will grow only in soil fertile with popular interest and appreciation of the art. It is, therefore, primarily the people who make the music of a country—not its musicians. These are a later outgrowth of the popular artistic life. Nor does the apparent appreciation of a large number of people of a well-advertised virtuoso argue any interest in music. The crowds that stream to the concerts of Patti and Paderewski are seeking not so much music as opportunity to see and hear a much-talked-about individual. One really simple, beautiful melody which permeates the mass of the people—which is *im Volksmunde*, which touches the heart and abides in the memory—does more than many artists for the musical growth of a nation. The artist ministers to an aristocracy, to the small company of the really cultured in the world. But in a country like America only those influences which touch the mass can hope to civilize it. The power of a music center is great to affect those within reach of its radiations. The orchestra, the occasional opera season, even the church in great cities, exert a beneficent artistic influence. But this is for the well-to-do, or for those exceptional persons who are willing to make sacrifices for the sake of a beloved art. The poor, the dwellers in city slums or on outlying farms, are all dependent upon larger and more democratic influences—the music of church and school, of the street and cheap entertainment.

Of all these forces, school music is perhaps the most potent, because the most constant, and because it is brought to bear upon the impressionable mind and unformed taste of children. Much that is simple, good, and appropriate is being taught to school children throughout this country. Folk-songs of different nations, part-songs from many artistic sources, even music of the very

best description finds its way into the schoolroom. Much of this music is carried home; the children sing their songs together, and parents and friends enjoy the singing. In this way an interest in music is propagated. The school furnishes better music than church or entertainment, and through its teaching of note-reading gives access to new songs.

Whether this power is expended for good is largely a matter of the teacher — his training and his standards. Has the teacher skill and talent, taste and conscience, his influence upon his pupils, and through them upon the community, will be incalculable. But he must be left untrammelled by politics and the dictates of his superiors, who often exert an absolute power in deciding upon musical subjects of which they know nothing. If the teacher has neither skill nor taste, his influence will be to the perpetuation of trashy music and mechanical singing. If he has no conscience, he will select for his school-work music which, instead of appealing to the best in his pupils, will satisfy his own personal taste, or help him to the quickest and most easy popularity. This teacher will give a cheap and catchy song to his pupils because of these qualities, irrespective of whether its effect is moral or immoral, its content appropriate or inappropriate, or its music and poetry good or bad. He will give love-songs to children, “train down” or “train up” voices for special occasions, and sacrifice the future of beautiful voices for the sake of singing ambitious music.

The really faithful and conscientious teacher must have courage and patience, must be content to surrender immediate popularity, and must regard the well-being of his pupils more than his reputation for securing glittering results. He will live up to the best he knows, though not by adherence to a set of rigid standards. He will remember that it is possible to interest children in good music as readily as in bad, and that much of the best music has in it the power to attract the untrained mind. He will not try to compete with the vaudeville and minstrel show, though he knows that the forms of music spread about by these entertainments is the most popular of all. The really valuable teacher will seek to know what is possible, not only of school music, but of all music. He must have had the vocal experience which he deems advisable

and practical for his pupils. His ability to play instruments—especially the piano—will be the greatest resource in his work, though he must not confuse the less with the greater, and must not overestimate the importance of the piano in the study of singing. Some knowledge of languages, too, opens the way to much beautiful song material, which, without a knowledge of strange tongues, would be unattainable.

Perhaps the greatest fault of the special teacher in the past has been his failure to recognize the relation between his work and the general work of the school. He has too often considered the teaching of his art a thing apart, without common ground with other subjects of the curriculum. Not only this, but the music master of the past knows little of the theory of education, and less of the progress of modern thought in this direction. Many schoolbooks in constant use in America are witnesses to the truth of this statement; for these disclose methods of teaching obsolete twenty years ago in other provinces.

It has been said, indeed, of the special teacher of music that he is either a musician who knows no pedagogy or a pedagogue who knows no music. This will doubtless be true in some degree until the public realizes that more training is demanded of the special teacher than the three-week course in summer schools throughout the country. So long as the scrappy and superficial instruction given at such schools is regarded seriously by teachers and pupils, there is little prospect of improvement. In the meantime, the courses for the training of specialists offered by leading universities and teachers' colleges give evidence that there has been an awakening, in more than one educational center, to the necessity for such training.

In the larger future awaiting music education in schools, its province will be enlarged, its mission will be regarded more seriously, and greater demands will be made upon the skill and knowledge of those who teach the art. To this development will contribute only those whose outlook upon the subject is large and complete.

The school of teaching which recognizes technical training in the purely intellectual phases of the art as the one thing needful,

as well as the school which finds emotional joy in singing the one essential, must realize that each conception is partial, and that only through co-operation and mutual appreciation can the true and universal way be gained.

ELEANOR SMITH.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
College of Education.